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THE IMPORTANCE
OF ART IN WAR-
TIME BY LEON M. LION
THE RESURRECTION
OF RHEIMS a Poem
by Osbert Burdett.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF
ART IN WAR TIME.

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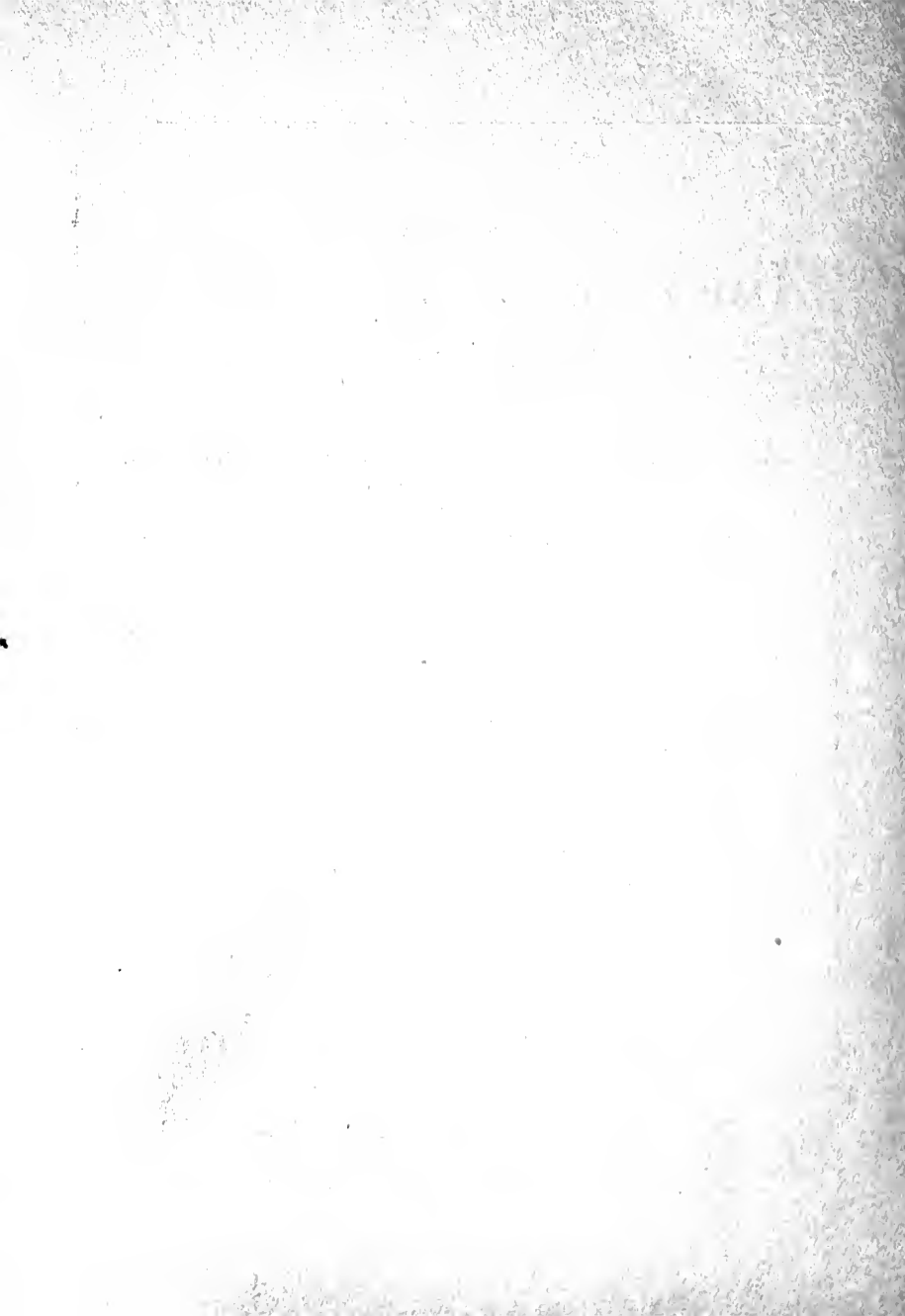
THE IMPORTANCE OF ART IN WAR-TIME.

Being a few notes for an address given at the Watford Labour Church,
March 11th, 1917.

BY
LEON M. LION.

Together with
THE RESURRECTION OF RHEIMS
a poem by
OSBERT BURDETT

LONDON : HENDERSONS
66 CHARING CROSS ROAD, W.C.
December, 1920.



FOREWORD.

A POEM in violent reaction to the mass emotion of the moment is an invaluable record to historian and sociologist. Mr. Osbert Burdett's "Resurrection of Rheims," written in the early part of 1916, and so carelessly esteemed by its author that he has not troubled to publish it, is of this genre—subconsciously, perhaps. It is, besides, of such quality that it becomes little less than a duty to rescue it from danger of oblivion, and afford it at least a temporary abiding place in print.

In 1916-17, the Editors of several periodicals of high critical profession were impelled, from motives of polity—not lack of appreciation—to refuse it harbourage, and the author himself is now finely indifferent as to whether it is lost or preserved, regarding it (in his own words) "as little more than an exercise or experiment at the time in unrhymed irregular verse, in which it seemed proper to choose an irregular subject, and to suit an anti-traditional matter to an anti-traditional form." All that, notwithstanding, his poem is my chief motive and only justification for responding to the request of certain indiscreet friends that I should print these fugitive notes for my address on the subject of Art in War-Time.

They were gathered to be spoken, not read, and I have not refashioned them.

To those whom they annoy—I genuflect.

To those whom they amuse—I smile back.

To Osbert Burdett—for his generous permission to drag his fine poem at the tail of my unworthy cart—my unbounded gratitude.

L.M.L.

Bushey.

December, 1920.



THE IMPORTANCE OF ART IN WAR TIME.

WHEN our good friend, Fred Gorle, suggested to me that I should give an address here one Sunday, he replied to my enquiry as to choice of subject, "Anything you like," and in a spirit of ribaldry I answered, "How about 'The Importance of Art in War-time?'" I had spoken lightly, with a chuckle of frivolous cynicism—for to consider seriously the activities of artists, writers, thinkers, in the midst of this mad orgy of slaughter, seemed, on the face of it, merely to recognise a futile waste of energies which might well be devoted to *more immediately practical purposes*. I say advisedly, "on the face of it," for, like most issues which we hurriedly assess at their face values—this surface view is a very shallow and insufficient one—and, when once I began to analyse and consider what was comprehended in that loose phrase, "more immediately practical purposes," a sudden doubt awoke in my mind as to whether "The Importance of Art in War-time" did not assuredly contribute very largely to it.

For what is (and ever has been) the function of the artist, in all times and climes? Surely that of the torchbearer—the guardian of the light that not only cheers and heartens the multitudes in their twilight, but, utilitarianly, also, is a beacon for their guidance along the path towards the goal to which they march.

"Where there is no vision, the people perish."

In the years 1914-15 of the present war, you will find our goal and purpose—a very high and noble one—admirably and sincerely epitomised by the best of our journalists and publicists as a resolve to eradicate the ideal of force as the governing arbitrament in human affairs, and to enthrone justice, reason, love, in their place; where, indeed, they have been long enthroned by the best sense and feeling of the world, and have had at least lip-service paid them by the bad, the stupid, and the shallow.

In those early days, Press and public alike grew lyrical in their ecstasy over our objectives. It was "the War to end War." It was to put down aggression, arrogance, frightfulness. It was to clear away the old, outworn lumber of governing castes exploiting peoples for their own base ends—to cut a clearing in the hoary forest of old follies—a clearing which should give the new generation, with their new lives, and new visions, room to map out and start afresh on the foundations of a better, saner, social structure, both nationally and internationally.

And all this was not the mere hyperbole of the hysterical newspaper man, the professor, the clergyman, the essayist, it was the common coin of speech, and thought, of the man in the train, the club, the factory. But, unhappily, just as the necessities of war have caused us to surrender our gold coinage, with its unmistakable honest ring (that symbol of material value less mutable than others of its kidney), and substitute for it a *paper* voucher, whose only articulation is a hoarse crackling—so in the dust and noise, the sweat and fume of war, we have also surrendered and yielded up, our ecstasy—that spiritual coinage of fine gold which we exchanged so freely, in street, in camp, in factory, brother with brother, (for *then*, in virtue of our crusade, were we not *all* in Britain, "this band of brothers"). And, for this pure gold of noble motives and ideals, we have again substituted a paper coinage—of *gross* material ends, and objects—which neither rings nor sings, but crackles dryly, harshly, like withered leaves with neither sap nor promise.

To-day, in our myriad tongued Press, echoed by a thousand publicists, and re-echoed by the million men and women round us, our great objective is summed up in the muddy, shirking phrase "to win the war." I nail it, *deliberately*, as a *shirking* phrase, a lying, deceitful, half-truth phrase, which, by its brutish soullessness can only defeat its scare-crow bald objective.

One might as reasonably say that my only object to-night is to fill up thirty minutes with a string of words—not, mark you, to arrive at some fresh regrouping of ideas, which is, in truth, my real and ultimate object—but to get through these thirty minutes, somehow, anyhow, and so home to supper.

And it is here that the true importance of Art in War-time is brought irresistibly home to me. For Art is our *spiritual* mint, and the artist (in every craft and medium) is the gold-seeker, miner, artificer, who coins for us those golden symbols, with their true melodious ring, which are our stimulus and inspiration, as we struggle towards the light.

And truly—a struggle towards the light, in its holiest sense—was what this war meant to our people in 1914-15. The fires of sacrifice, of gladly offered service, blazed everywhere; stirred at the call of Duty, of Humanity. There was no hate then to corrode the hater and stultify his decencies; no greed to seize on power, or material advancement, for this interest or that. The nation was fused to a white heat of one high purpose.

Had the importance, the vital importance, of Art in War-time been more considered then by those in high command, this tragic cooling process which has superseded it (and the results of which we are witnessing now), might have been indefinitely delayed. One recalls that pregnant warning of Matthew Arnold's:—

But each day brings its petty dust
Our soon choked souls to fill,
And we forget because we *must*,
And not because we *will*.

Indeed, we cannot too often be reminded that Progress, Civilisation, Liberty, are never really in our grasp. They are far cities, always calling to us over the mountain range, and the road to them is

always in the making. It is like a cutting, a black tunnel, through the huge mountains of ignorance and stupidity. Mankind hacks and blasts and delves his way through, with the blind faith and hope that somewhere the last wall of rock will give way, and on the other side the sunlight will break through.

Now, it is the business of the artist to be the link-man, the torch-bearer; to go ahead and light the way with his flame (not, mark you, disdaining his share of the work with the pick and shovel, but, above all, never letting the light die down, so that his fellows grope in darkness, hacking their way they know not where). It has always seemed to me so illuminating that in ancient books, the psalmists, prophets, poets, leaders, were all alike hailed as "seers." The word "seer" is so clear a definition of artist, the one who sees, the one who goes ahead watching, seeing not only for himself, but passing on his vision to those who press behind.

For most of us are inarticulate; our thoughts, emotions, ideals, are vague and formless, inchoate and evasive. They are like birds flying high, like larks in a far sky, a moment glimpsed, then disappearing, then, for an instant perhaps, the fluttering wing, a flying feather, and it is gone.

But the artist is the hunter, the snarer of these swift-winged thoughts and emotions, truly the "blue birds" of happiness. Skilled artificer, he weaves his cunning net of words, and the bird of thought is held, fast-prisoned there for us to see, to touch—almost to measure.

In each man's own experience, numberless instances will no doubt be recalled where some artist has captured for him a fugitive vision—drifting, scarce realised—and captured it, sometimes, not only with net of words in prose and poetry, but in cloudier mists of music, painting, sculpture. Think of the beauties of the Thames,

which no one saw or realised till Whistler revealed them to us, and Wylie Muirhead Bone, and the other modern masters of etching. Think of the wonder, the new joy and revelation of the human form which Rodin has unprisoned for us.

Once we recognise that *this* is the function of the artist; to deepen and expand sensibilities, to make our souls articulate, we see how tremendously important it is that he should have room and opportunity, not only for his vision, but also for his expression of it. To say "Man does not live by bread alone" is to express a very partial truth, for certainly if he does not exist solely by material means, still *less* does he, in full and reasoned consciousness, live, or die, *for* them.

In the autumn of 1914, when all our youth was dashing into khaki, I remember with what a fervour of idealism some of my new soldier friends (including my own brothers), in discussing our objects in the war, and all that they stood for, caught hold of that wonderful couplet,

"At the door of Life, at the gate of Breath,
There are worse things waiting for man than Death."

It epitomised, for them, the cause and huge necessity for which they were giving up ease, home, material prosperity, at the call, not only of England, but of humanity. And that clarion call, with its silver stoicism, yet expressing such boundless faith and hope, may well stand as my first illustration of the use and function of the artist.

It expresses the truth, which every fine soul who has looked at life with any imagination has felt, vaguely, dumbly, but lacked capacity to give articulation to, even in such halting words as would make it comprehensible to themselves, far less to others.

And thus, the debt we owe to artists for epitomising and expressing for us our faiths and philosophies (cut diamond clear in place of vaguely sensed "through a glass darkly") is immeasurable—incalculable.

It is not difficult, even to the man in the street, to set out, by an imposing array of *facts*, the reasons and causes for our entering upon this war. But however accurately they may be set out, however skilfully they may be chosen, they would not, in themselves, have roused the nation to that passion of sacrifice.

For *facts*, we must remember, are not *truths*; they are only the minutest particles of a truth, a splintered chip from the outside edge, if one may coin the simile. The French have apprehended and expressed this most happily in their distinction, "*la vérité*" and "*la vraie vérité*"—"the *truth*," and "the *true truth*"; that is to say, one is the *bald* truth which, derisively, we call a "*fact*," a grey, lifeless, material thing; and the other—the *true truth*—which is the spiritual essence of such facts distilled by the artist, for he alone has the secret of this magic distillation, this concentrated essence of a myriad facts.

If we come to examine our true concepts of things—life, the world, humanity, we shall find that not only have they been invariably revealed to us *only by* the artist, but, also, he alone has articulately expressed them for us.

It is he who takes our knowledge, our faith, our hopes, and our (often erroneous) deductions therefrom, and synthesises them through that crucible that we call his art. May I give you an example of what I mean? Take the word "England!" Assuredly it means different things to every man and woman here—thoughts, emotions, prejudices, racial and instinctive, intangible things, which, were we asked to define in a court of law, for instance, we

should find our daily store of speech and image most insufficient for.

We could compile a mass of *facts* about England; geographical, geological, ethnographical, commercial, but all our facts would probably differ, in form and correlation if not in substance, and at the end give but a dull and muddled impression of what, in our hearts, we know is truly England.

But if we turn for help to England's artists, her most representative one, Shakespeare, for instance, and quote these lines from Richard II.:—

This royal Throne of Kings, this sceptred isle,
This other Eden, demi-Paradise;
This fortress, built by Nature for herself,
Against infection and the hand of war;
This happy breed of men; this little world;
This precious stone set in a silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall,
Or as a moat—defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands;
This blessed plot,— this earth,—this realm,—
This England!

Surely *here* is one of the *true* truths, which we have all felt, and to which we could *all* subscribe.

Similarly, in the first year of the war, was there one of us who, at some time or another, was not deeply moved and stirred (the lump in the throat, and quiver of the eye) as we saw those first Volunteers drilling; most of them still in the garb of workshop, and office (waiting smilingly for the belated khaki). Yet had we been asked for a coherent explanation of this emotion (about which it is our English habit to look so shame-faced), how many of us could have given it a reasoned articulation! Not one in ten thousand, I dare swear.

Fortunately it was done for us by the artists of the time, notably our young poets—many of them themselves in khaki—and every newspaper, crammed full though they were with vital, urgent, important *facts* about the war, yet found it necessary to give space to these poets, and lyrical prose writers, who fixed and envisaged for us the meaning and objects of our sacrifices far more accurately than any bald facts could have done.

As an example of the multitude of noble verse that was produced in 1914-15, I should like to read you a little poem of Lieut. Herbert Asquith's, who, in these verses, entitled "The Volunteer," has raised an eternal monument to our London city clerk, ill-paid, black-coated, respectable—with the wonder-spirit in him mostly strangled by our commercial conventionalities.

THE VOLUNTEER.

Here lies a clerk who half his life had spent
Toiling at ledgers in a city grey,
Thinking that so his days would drift away
With no lance broken in life's tournament:
Yet ever 'twixt the books and his bright eyes
The gleaming eagles of the legions came,
And horsemen, charging under phantom skies,
Went thundering past beneath the oriflamme.

And now those waiting dreams are satisfied;
From twilight into spacious dawn he went;
His lance is broken; but he lies content
With that high hour, in which he lived and died.
And falling thus he wants no recompense.
Who found his battle in the last resort;
Nor needs he any hearse to bear him hence.
Who goes to join the men of Agincourt.

There, I think you will agree with me, breathes more the spirit of England in 1914-15 than a score of Blue Books could give us. Yet

this is only one instance of a thousand such focussings of our ideals and emotions in the war's early stages.

And here I come to the tragical aspect of the present day. This singing has well-nigh ceased, the glitter of the shining wings has passed away; and *with* it—whether it be the *effect* or the *causation* of this loss, I hardly dare say—but, *with* its loss, has come a difference in our outlook, not only on the war, but on our fellow men, and on our *goal* in this crusade.

Look at our popular Press to-day. What is the battle-cry, the ideal towards which they urge us? Who are the singers of the ecstasy? In those early days, when the vision burned in us, the poor, witless fool who attempted to sum up our resolution, our high crusade, in such a hollow phrase as “to win the war” would have been laughed to scorn.

But now—when, for the moment, our artists, our singers, are mute—who have taken their places, usurped their purple and their pulpits, and, in place of the inspiration, the ideals which fused us, spread doubts, jealousies, pettinesses, mistrusts to sever and to weaken us. The mud larks of the gutter Press have no message that can cheer us, for they have no vision. Groping in the slime, what light can *they* set up that we may follow? What but a distracting glimmer of their half-blinded eyes?

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.”

Some prophet gave us that fine coin of thought, “To will the end is to will the means.” We must beware how we debase that coinage with its nefarious counterfeit, “To will the means is to will the end.” It is *not*. It is a *lie*. There is a grave peril which daily becomes apparent, that in concentrating all our efforts on the *means*, we shall *forget* the *end*—the goal we set out to attain. To keep our eyes fixedly on this; to see that in the press for its

attainment we do not *soil* ourselves—and so our purpose; that we do not too far yield principles to expediency—and thus put *out* our guiding light; this is our primary duty. For, adherence to principles, if they be good ones, and worth drawing the sword for, is the truest expediency in the long run; it is only the hasty, short-sighted people of little vision, who believe that for the sake of momentary advantage to-day is *expedient* to throw aside the spiritual shield and armour we are fighting *with* and *for*—the shield of Liberty. To disregard this in our hard endeavour to *will the means* is to deceive ourselves that we are willing the end.

Where is the artist of to-day who, with magic word or symbol will rouse us to this peril, awaken us from the lassitude that these icy years of war have frozen upon us; waken us, as Shelley or Swinburne would have wakened us, with the *triumphant hope*, not merely and pettily “to win the war,” but to win the guerdon of our high emprise. See where we drift for lack of it. To-day, in one of our leading Sunday papers, the political correspondent quotes with gloating satisfaction the latest happy nickname for our House of Commons: “St. Stephen’s menagerie.” Think of it! The people’s forum, the chosen delegates, however inadequate we may think them, still the chosen delegates of the British people: “St. Stephen’s menagerie.”

And that is characteristic of the emotional appeals that are being flung at us to-day. Never, I think, did the importance of Art in War-time call more loudly for recognition. Never was our need of the artist more urgent. Think what a Wordsworth might do for us to-day, with an equivalent to his sonnet to Milton, suited to our present needs; or that other noble sonnet of his, “The world is too much with us,” embodying in one brief poem, at once a prayer, a hope, and a philosophy. A perfect example of the artist-seer’s accomplishment.

But though we have no Milton, no Wordsworth, Shelley, or Swinburne, we have yet a host of young singers and seers, who *can* revive for us the vision if we will only call for it.

Ever since the war many artists, in their varying crafts, have given us their vision of this madness, recording, interpreting, consoling (for a true interpretation is always consoling, since "To understand all is to forgive all").

In literature, we have Mr. Wells' great novel, "Mr. Britling Sees it Through," with its marvellous record of the average educated Englishman's attitude towards war and civilised life in 1913-14 (a picture to be proud of, and grateful for), and the gradual evolution of his thought and emotions, as the maniacal ideas of war swept over Europe, and man, in its grip, seemed so utterly powerless for good, that in despair the artist's creative mind turns, and gropes in blind, half benumbed hope, to that "something beyond ourselves which makes for righteousness."

In the graphic arts, we have had Mr. Nevinson, with his uncompromising, angular depiction of the fighting line itself, semi-distorted, half de-humanised, yet implacable in its insistence on the truth,—War, as it really is,—and awakening in us precisely that responsive emotion that the artist aimed at. Equally interpretive in their way have been the cartoons of Will Dyson and M. Rae-maecker—imperishable records in tragic satire.

Music, no doubt, is yielding, or will yield, her contribution to our spiritual treasure, and the flood of poetry, which seems, alas, to have died down all too soon, I have already referred to.

But the function of the artist is not only to cheer and hearten us along the road to our immediate goal, not only to keep well illumined the rosy summit of the hilltop we aspire to. He has yet a further function—indeed a solemn duty—to warn and remind

us that the goal we seek so desperately is not a *final* one, but only a halting place upon that road without end which humanity so bravely travels. And we *need* reminding, continually, that there are other goals and larger purposes beyond "our more immediately *practical* ones."

And here is where the artist, as Iconoclast, comes in; the destroyer and rebuilder; the spirit which glories in the tempest and the tumult, in death and destruction, because thereby all decaying things are swept away, and the ground, left unencumbered, lies ready for new births to come!

These are Art's monitors. Their mission (self-conceived, if you will, but none the less truly their mission) is to test the lights that have been left shining from the past, to show where this one is flickering dimly, where that one has been blown out of its true path, and where others, perhaps, have lost their original use and purpose, and stand now, not for a guide, but as false lights luring us into blind alleys of lethargy.

They, also, are consolers, for they show us that "there is a soul of goodness in things evil, could men but fittingly distill it out."

Such a poet we had living among us here only last year in Osbert Burdett, and I propose, in conclusion, to read you one of his most recent visions, which, probably owing to its audacity of theme, even more than of treatment, has not yet been published in any paper. It is a cry to the keepers of the gates of modern art,—a cry for freedom for the artist, and a message of consolation for those who grieve too deeply for our losses through the ravages of war, our loss in legacies of art and beauty from the great past. At first this poem may cut and hurt one by its seeming vandalism, but the surgery is a healthy one, and it sets up a light ahead for us.

THE RESURRECTION OF RHEIMS.

I heard a voice from the ruins of Rheims crying :

“ O museums, and art treasure-houses;

In which what was ever alive in the Past lives on;

O moving pageant of memory :

The past lives on in you too much; it lays its hands on the throat of the present;

It tempts us to seek in museums that which we should find chiefly in our own handiwork.

It oppresses us with the dreams of the old masters.

It is an incubus on the new life which is now struggling to birth.

By it originality is killed, and the triumph of academies is completed.

How merciful is the Providence which makes you forbidding to the multitude!

Which makes you chiefly attractive to those who are already rotted with culture;

Who, like worms in a corpse, feed on what is already done with;

How thankful we are that the Cathedral of Rheims has been destroyed!

“ Will not the Germans be remembered more gratefully for this than for all the universities which they have built?

They thought that they were destroying me when they burst the tomb in which my spirit was buried;

But will posterity remember them less cheerfully on that account?

For this what sins shall not be forgiven them?

All the worship of the Hohenzollerns which they mistook for patriotism;

All the dominion of Prussia which they mistook for German unity;

All the militarism which they mistook for glory;

All the labouriousness which they mistook for learning;

All the slavery which they mistook for civilisation;

All the superstitions of science which we have outvied them in worshipping among ourselves;

All the culture without criticism, and all the religion without irreverence,
(For criticism and irreverence are the foundations on which alone culture and religion can arise,)

How thankful we are that the Cathedral of Rheims has been destroyed!

" Lo! I tell you a truth!

A masterpiece is that which obliterates the standards of the past;
 Whose very existence is a challenge to all its predecessors;
 Which does not disdain the baptism of mocking laughter;
 Which breaks the rules which may not be broken;
 Which devastates the masterpieces out of which it springs;
 Which, assuming the life-blood that was in them, allows them to linger
 As whitened sepulchres only from which the spirit has fled;
 Which guts the old and revered, to leave it
 The ruin of a monument—of style.
 The real Huns are the men of genius,
 Who know that to create is to destroy;
 That the test of art is invention;
 That the loved disciple is he who does not copy his master;
 Who have grasped the paradox of form;
 Who know that where art is consumed without being produced it corrupts
 the consumers;
 Who prevent the world from perishing through an unearned increment
 of art;
How thankful we are that the Cathedral of Rheims has been destroyed!

" There is this for a sign in our cities;

We have the most imposing museums, and the most elaborate scholarships;
 Fat scholarships are endowed for research;
 Masterpieces are overcrowded on our walls.
 But out of these things there arises a lamentation for the scarcity of art.
 Art is the prisoner of the museums; he is hunted there from the houses.
 He is not allowed out of the galleries, and in the galleries he grows anæmic
 and dies.
 In the museums we complain that there is surfeit; in the streets we
 complain that we are starved.
 He lives now in a West-End mansion; he has even gone slumming like
 the rest.
 The world in fact is living on an unearned increment of art.
 The products of the Past are piled up; we go now to the past for
 consolation.
 We turn away in bitterness from our streets.
 We escape from the Past as into a dream; we even describe the dream
 as our Reality.
 Like Hamlet we mistake the futility of our lives for the futility of
 existence;

Like Hamlet we suffer from the Past as from a form of dram-drinking.
Heavy and sweet—Oh, how sweet!—the Past wraps us in its folds as in a
perfume;

We are drowsed by the fingers of its painters.

The poetry of the Past sings us one song; it sings us with a lullaby to
sleep.

We awake, and return, enfeebled;

How thankful we are that the Cat'edral of Rheims has been destroyed!

“ Who are the great men?

The great men are those who supplied needs which no one else had
experienced;

Who created new needs; and every new need is an indictment of history.

For the Past lives, like ourselves, by being born again,

And that it may be born it must die.

It is born under a new name, remembering consciously nothing.

It can re-arise only from the ruins of itself.

How thankful we are that the Cathedral of Rheims has been destroyed!

“ Lo! I tell you a truth :

Beauty eludes those who seek her for herself. She is not an end in herself.

She is the by-product of an end which has been gained.

Beauty is to be found where the cloudlands gather together,

Who have grouped themselves solely to warm their hands at the rising
or the setting of the sun.

She is found also in flowers, who care nothing about her; who care only
to entice the honey-searching fly.

Beauty is found wherever animals, or men, have not troubled themselves
about her; but have cared greatly that the day's work may be
supremely well done.

Beauty is the seal of accomplishment, as rest is the sacrament of work.

Beauty is to be found wherever men have thrown all their energies into
some other object but its pursuit.

Energy solely in its pursuit will achieve nothing, has ever achieved
nothing.

Beauty must not be sought if it is to be found.

But where men or animals or plants, (the most single-minded souls in
creation, who will interest themselves in nothing which does not con-
cern them, in nothing which does not pay),

Where these will spend without stint to achieve some necessary and single-minded aim,
 Beauty will steal upon their work like the morning;
 It will come secretly upon them like laughter or a thief in the night.

" A motor-car built to display the wealth of the man who owns it;
 A door in the street painted merely to shine like glass;
 The long rods polished to leap in a sleepless race on the engine;
 The permanent way, laid to measure along the directest road.
 How beautiful you are, multitudinous vessels of dishonour!
 You gave no reverence to beauty, but were content to respect your materials.
 And lo! beauty has laughed from your faces, and has stolen upon you unaware!
 Men shall find you where they sought you not;
 Not in the blue china in the Gallery, but in the blue policeman in the gallery;
 Not in the faded picture, but in the shadows freshly fallen on the floor;
 Not in the logical carpet, but in the silver point of the asphalté of the streets;
 On the doors with their great knockers;
 In Piccadilly Circus as it pullulates with lights;
 In the monstrous posters which resemble constellations; in the gas-flares on the market stalls at night.
 In all places where immense energy is expending;
 In all places where the museum-bats must rub their eyes.
 Not in the ruin, but in the fire which consumes it;
 Not in the victories won, but in the struggles whose issue is in doubt.
How thankful we are that the Cathedral of Rheims has been destroyed!

" The windows of Chartres remain; the choir of Beauvais remains.
 But these can never teach us what the ruins of Rheims teach us;
 Nor can we learn in the Library of Paris the lesson we are learning at Louvain.
 O might Rheims and Louvain! you no longer trouble our conscience; your dead memories trouble us no more.
 Built out of faith and violence, you have fallen before a new faith and a new violence.
 The ghost of the Gothic in you at last is laid to rest.
 In you, as in Chartres and Beauvais, and all the grey Gothic cathedrals,
 The spirit died before the body, and the body encumbered the ground.

For its smell of decay we knew the base imitations on every side.
Your carcase cried and there was none to bury it,
Till war, out of which you sprang, belatedly lighted your pyre.

Form rises out of your ruins :—

“ If you would rebuild me as I was, you will not succeed in the attempt.
If you would preserve my spirit, you must re-create the letter of my form.
No longer the pointed arch, and the clustered column; no longer the
flying buttress, nor the gable which flowered into a spire.

The age of stone buildings is passing; the age of steel buildings is at hand.
Employ the materials in which you believe; in which you have the living
faith that they will repay you best.

Do not be ashamed of them, nor hide them; for such use sanctifies.

The modern spirit can express itself without hypocrisy in these alone.

Until you can subdue steel and concrete, as your fathers subdued stone
and marble, a great cathedral will not arise again.

But already my ruins begin to stir your imaginations as my beauties have
not stirred them for four hundred years.

Lamentations for me every hypocrite will share.

But lamentations did not build me, neither can they rebuild me.

At the hands of hypocrites I shall not rise again,

But, if there be no trace of resemblance in my successor, the hope of my
resurrection is secure.”

OSBERT BURDETT.

Bushey,
1916.

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